

Religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do what is good

(Doctrine of Life 8)

The New Church is an international organization of people striving to improve their conscious relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, the one God who rules heaven and earth.

We extend a warm welcome to everyone, and invite you to take what you like and return it freely. We use the Bible and the Heavenly Doctrine revealed by the Lord and published by Emanuel Swedenborg to guide us in our lives, especially in our relationships. We freely share our love and understanding with each other, and try to give one another support in our spiritual journeys.

Temporarily the Hurstville Society is without a **Pastor**. During this period the Society will be served by lay leaders and visiting preachers.

Worship Services are held each Sunday at 10:00 AM. **Sunday School** is held concurrently with the worship service (prior notice required).

Young People's Group is held once a month in conjunction with the Young People's Group at the New Church at 2 Shirley St, Roseville.

A **tea and social** in conjunction with **discussion** meets on the 1st Friday of each month (January excepted) beginning at 7 00 pm. This will be conducted by visiting ministers when available or lay led as appropriate.

Bible Study and **Discussion Classes** previously held midweek have been suspended until further notice.

The Swedenborg Bookroom, at 22 Dudley Street, Penshurst, contains books by and about Emanuel Swedenborg for sale or loan. It is open by appointment.

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Call or come at anytime.



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society May 2006

Our Love Affair With Conjugal Love

Roslyn Taylor

In February I attended a wonderful Marriage Conference in Bryn Athyn. Designed for both single and married people, the conference offered plenary addresses and workshops addressing the ideal side of marriage, as well as taking a realistic view of difficulties people face: life after divorce, adultery, challenging parenting issues. There was family entertainment, couple time, and opportunities for encouragement for wherever participants were in their marriage journey. Other large church conferences have been held in Bryn Athyn before - Mental Health Symposia, Women's Symposia - but I don't think I've ever seen one on the scale of this, with such support from the Bryn Athyn Church. Clearly, marriage is a topic of great importance in our faith community.

Yet my experience also is that other New Church organizations do not

emphasise teachings about marriage to such an extent. Many readers of Swedenborg's writings, wherever they stand on the nature of the Writings, come away with different messages: that the Lord is teaching us in deeper ways in the Bible about ourselves and God, or that the Lord is all about love balanced with truth, or that the purpose of life is to regenerate and build a new life. Not everyone hears the take-away message that marriage love is the deepest love of all and that marriage excels all other uses. I believe the Lord speaks differently to different people, depending on their spiritual state and the issues they face in their lives.

So I asked the questions, why a Marriage Conference instead of for example a Spiritual Rebirth Conference, and what is the story of how we've dealt as a faith community with teachings about marriage? I'd like to share with you a few things I found out as I investigated "our love affair with conjugal love."

To get a feel for where we stand at present, I surveyed people from many New Church organizations, about the importance to them of teachings about marriage. In comparing responses from General Church and British Conference members, the primary respondents to the survey, I have found so far that General Church members place Conjugal Love as the second most emphasised teaching, and British Conference members placing it in fourth place. I feel these findings, together with other findings in the survey, support my subjective experience that teachings about conjugal love are felt to be more emphasised in the General Church than in at least one other branch of the New Church.

Next, I looked into the history of the General Church with respect to teachings about marriage and conjugal love. Interestingly, neither of these was in the defining positions of the Academy movement, from which the General Church grew. Teachings about marriage had been controversial though, from the beginning of the Academy movement. There was quite a bit of discussion within the international New Church in 1889 about whether one could really consider the teachings about concubines and mistresses for men to be divinely inspired, with Academy people defending that position. I wonder if some of our emphasis on conjugal love, both the book and the

News Notes

Recent travellers have been **Sam and Kristen Johnson** visiting in Melbourne, **Murray and Lori Heldon** escaping to the Blue Mountains for a few days with friends, and **Ros Taylor** with **Jon Caldwell** visiting the Perth Circle at the end of April. Earlier in the month, **Brian and Patricia Walsh** took a leisurely trip enjoying healing hot springs throughout New South Wales.

On the mend are **Shirley Taylor** and **Gail Markou** after their respective knee operations, both up and walking. **Cliff Adamou** has taken some much-deserved time off work to heal his injured back. **Naomi Heldon's** leg condition is stabilised after many attempted therapies. Best wishes for healing for all of you!

Easter services were well celebrated and attended. It's always good to have the extended church family come together and worship. On Good Friday a gathering celebrated the Lord's Last Supper, with shared readings and bread and wine. The children received flowers on Easter morning after a children's talk, and then learned more about the Easter story in a Sunday School class. Thanks to all who worked so hard to make this sacred holiday so special.

Farewell Luncheon to Roslyn Taylor and Family

Please join us for a **Pot Luck lunch** on **Sunday 7th May** after church. *Bring something to share for lunch.* We will be farewelling Ros and Jon along with her other children Andrea and Chris who arrive in the first week of May for a brief visit.

May Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Ted Simmons** (6th), **Brandon Hines** (10th), **John Sandow** (18th), **Naomi Heldon** (20th), **Daniel Walsh** (27th), and **Brian Walsh** (31st).

way though, the history of Dot's association with the Hurstville Society slots in nicely with the point reached in the March issue. The last entry then was from the November New Church Life [NCL] 1934 and describes the marriage of Mora White to Frederick Fletcher on 24th August 1934 and the subsequent closing of the Day School.

A new era was about to begin for the Hurstville Society. The **May NCL 1935** "Church News" reads: *The Rev. W. Cairns Henderson has accepted a call extended by the society of the General Church at Hurstville, Sydney, Australia, where he will assist the Rev. Richard Morse in the uses of the church. As stated in the above report, Mr. Henderson's duties as Visiting Minister of the General Church in England will be relinquished at the end of April. After a month's holiday, he and Mrs. Henderson will sail for Australia about June 1st. Rev Richard Morse says in June NCL 1935: None can remain in this temporary stage of existence beyond a very limited period, and the labors of one are entered into by another. We look forward to the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Henderson with great interest and pleasure.*

Again in **September NCL 1935**: *We are in happy expectation regarding the near advent in our midst of the Rev. and Mrs. W. Cairns Henderson, who should arrive on or about the 8th of August. My share in it is caused by the thought of the Society's continuity under the guidance of one who is strong in the faith of the Church, and who, in all probability, has before him many years of usefulness in a rapidly developing district. The city of Sydney, the metropolis of New South Wales, is built upon the southeast coast of the Australian continent. About ten miles south of Sydney lies the municipality of Hurstville, in pleasant undulatory formation, nearly one hundred feet above the Pacific Ocean, which may be seen from many places. Its present population is about 40,000, but this is continually increasing, chiefly because we are on the railway line from the metropolis to the rich lands of the south coast.*

Dot was also about to arrive on the scene and it would be Rev Cairns Henderson who would perform her marriage on February 25th 1939. Stay tuned for the arrival of Rev W Cairns Henderson in our next Newsletter.

teachings, grew out of the intensity of this sort of debate.

The Academy movement in its inception, as well as in 1890 when it broke away from the General Convention of the New Church, emphasised the following:

1. The infallibility of Writings as divine revelation
2. The New Church should be distinct from the devastated "old" Christian church
3. The priesthood of the New Church is divinely instituted
4. New Church social life should be exclusive to its members and distinctive
5. The development of New Church education.

In pursuing distinctive social life, early General Church members strongly encouraged socialising and marrying within the church, as can be seen from articles and sermons in New Church Life in 1899. Their purpose was to prevent the dangers of individuals and the community absorbing the values of the devastated "old church," as well as avoiding the risks of non-conjugal marriages with people of different religions.

Another development was that by 1900 evangelisation efforts among both "intellectuals" and "the simple" had not resulted in church membership growth, so the concept of internal evangelisation was born. The focus on growing the church from within necessitated definite teachings about marriage, family and birth control. A review of the indices of New Church Life, as one way to see the trends in the thinking and values of General Church members, shows a definite increase in the percentage of items related to conjugal love in the time period from 1891 to 1910.

This increase is also attributable to the Kramph Will court case of 1908 - 1909. The General Church and Academy received national and international attention while Pennsylvania courts decided whether the "Swedenborgian doctrine of fornication and concubinage" should prevent it from benefiting from Mr. Kramph's will. General Church members again found themselves defending their views on marriage, with the effects of that possibly still being felt today.

After the favourable resolution of the court case, Bishop W.F. Pendleton enunciated in 1909 *The Principles of the Academy*, stating that “marriage in the church is essential to the conjugal, and vital to the existence of the Church”. In 1913 he wrote that “loyalty to the marriage bond...is to be cherished as the pearl of great price”. Since then, conjugal love and marriage have featured consistently in General Church and Academy journals, sermons, and classes.

And so we have come perhaps to be what some have called “The Marriage Church.” I believe it is healthy and useful for us as a faith community to practice corporate self-examination, to take a look at ourselves and our story, and to reflect on the value we place on these teachings in our individual lives and in our communal church life.

Rev. Frank and Louise Rose

The following is excerpted from a recent email message from Rev. Frank Rose, who will be the next visiting pastor in the Hurstville Society:

Dear Friends:

Louise and I are very much looking forward to our time with you this winter. We will be arriving via Qantas airlines at 6:05 am on Thursday, June 15 from Los Angeles...We will be returning to the United States on September 12.

I would also like to offer a series of doctrinal classes while we are there. The series is called: "Living Spiritually", and is a study of the doctrine of regeneration as we experience it...The course involves people reflecting on their experience of the subjects discussed. This course is very well adapted to people who are new to the church as well as to people who have been involved in it their whole life.

Our main thought is that we want to serve the congregation as best we can. We are proud of you for keeping on without having a resident pastor, and

Today, the issue is whether or not women should be priests or even be allowed to be lay leaders. The Writings are totally silent on these issues, and the position of the General Church is purely a doctrinal one, drawn only by men, based on history and their own view of life. Ministers have told me that given the differences between men and women (based on the male perspective) women are unlikely to make effective ministers. I find this hard to swallow. What about the men who make ineffective ministers?

As for women not being lay leaders, this again is a view that is difficult to understand. Essentially, a worship service is between the Lord and the individual participant, as is the case with the Holy Supper service. The service is merely a framework which allows the individual to communicate with the Lord. Without that individual communication the service is nothing but sterile theatre. It does not matter whether a man or a woman leads the service or who reads the Word or the sermon written by an ordained minister, or who leads a Holy Supper service.

It is time that the General Church came into a more enlightened view. The doctrine which sets up these gender differences is biased. People, of either gender, should be judged on their actual performance, not on preconceived attitudes based on doctrine which, drawn only by men, is lop-sided.

From AE 316c

“The little horn that came up among them, before which three of the former horns were plucked up by the roots, signifies the complete perversion of the Word by the application of the sense of its letter to confirm the love of dominion.”

Best wishes,
Barrie Ridgway,
Canberra.

More History

Last month (April) there was no article under this heading due to the Newsletter being dedicated to our long term member, Dorothy Heldon. In a

attitudes became part of the thinking of the General Church and have been carried down to the present day: doctrine is held to be a male prerogative, especially a male, priestly prerogative. And men, in drawing doctrine, see what they want to see – they see things from their own perspective, a perspective which does not have the input of the required other half – that of women.

All too often, only the literal sense of the Writings is seen, and so when men and women are mentioned in the Writings, the references are held to be gender issues – this or that applies to men while this or that applies to women. This usually means that men come out “on top”, as the “ruling elite”, doctrinally speaking.

Such thinking ignores several facts about the Writings which are that they are the Word, the Divine Human of the Lord and are only about the Lord and His glorification and in so far as they apply to humankind, they show us the way to regenerate. Every word that is written in the Writings therefore has to apply equally to everyone in the world, regardless of gender. Further, to take references to men and women as gender references ignores the definitions given in the Arcana (the first books of the Writings to be printed) for men and women and male and female. Despite this, the General Church, by saying that various statements in the Writings concerning men and women are gender-specific, totally ignores the points I have just made and by default this can only mean that there are different regenerative paths for men and women. Yet this cannot be.

I remember when I was a teenager hearing ministers stating emphatically that, because of the differences stated in the Writings between men and women, women should either be in the home or in occupations suited to women such as teaching or nursing. It was held that it was entirely wrong for women to be scientists, mathematicians, accountants and the like. Thankfully, that doctrine, drawn only by men, is no longer in vogue. One wonders whether it would ever have been acceptable if, as Miss White pointed out, both men and women had been involved in all uses. If women had been able to have input into drawing doctrine, perhaps they would have seen things differently.

feel very honoured to be allowed to be with you for three months.

*With love to you all
Frank and Louise Rose*

Frank has many interests, including bushwalking, an activity many of our members and friends also enjoy. In 1999, Frank included this article in a leaflet about Providence.

Knowing the Way

Love, joy and happiness are at the heart of the universe. It is reassuring to know that we are created by a God who loves us totally (even with our faults) and wants to share His joy with us. We might reject Him, but He will never reject us. All He asks is that we learn about the path that leads to heaven, and walk that path to the best of our ability.

No one becomes an angel, that is, comes into heaven, unless he or she carries angelic qualities from the world. And in angelic qualities there is knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through knowledge of it. DP #60

Sometimes when I am walking along my favourite mountain trails I think about this passage. How do you really know a trail? From walking it. How do you find a trail to follow? By learning about its existence.

Usually before I lead a hike in a new area, I study my growing collection of maps. I want to know where to find the trail head. I look for the starting altitude and elevation gain or loss. I want to know the trail's total distance and some of the nature of the terrain. Some of this information is in books. Some I have to work out from a study of contour maps.

By the time we set out on a new trail, I know something about it. Without that knowledge, I would not know about the existence of the trail, and I might not be willing to walk on it. But do I really know the trail? Not at all. There have been many times when I made the mistake of describing a hike to potential hikers. After I assured them it was easy, we all found that it was

not easy at all. Recently, we went along the “Mint Spring Trail.” I told people it is “relatively flat.” How did I know that? Well I knew that the trail started at 7960 feet above sea level, and finished at exactly the same altitude. What I did **not** know was how much ‘up and down’ took place between those two points. It turned out to be a delightful trail, but more strenuous than I had originally thought. From experiences like that, I have grown more cautious. And I still make mistakes. I realize that I can learn many things about a trail from books and maps.

But I don’t really **know** the trail until I have walked it. Walking gives me a completely different kind of knowledge than I ever could get from books or from other people. There is only one way to learn a trail - and that is from walking it, not just once, but many times.

The same is true of our spiritual journey. We know about the life that leads to heaven from books - especially the Word. This knowledge enables us to set off on a direction in life, and follow what we consider to be a right path. We walk in that path from knowing **about** it. As soon as we actually follow the steps that take us along that path, we know it in a totally different way. We **know** the path from walking it. This is how we learn to become angels, even while living our earthly lives.

Thanks Again Wonderful Friends

Last month, I was thanking you all for your warm welcome. Now, unbelievably, it’s time to say goodbye and thank-you. After Andrea and Chris have a chance to meet you and explore Sydney and environs for a week, we will be leaving on 9th May for a brief visit in Melbourne and Adelaide, and then return directly to the United States.

It has been a privilege for me to serve you for the past few months, and to work side-by-side with you as we each do our part to bring the Lord’s church on earth. My children have had a wonderful time becoming acquainted with their family and cultural heritage, with help from some fun-loving people here! My prayer for you my friends is that the Lord continues

to sustain you with blessings, individually and as a congregation, as you walk the path before you.

With love and affection,
Roslyn Taylor

Wholeness Theology volume is now available through the (General Church) New Church Bookstore

The recently published collection of essays, **Healing Words: A Sampler of Wholeness Theology** edited by **Roslyn Taylor**, is now available for \$US18.75 from the New Church Bookstore in Bryn Athyn. You can explore a refreshing new wholeness perspective on New Church teachings, with authors Emily Jane Lemole, Wendy Hoo, Dr. Leon James, Shada Sullivan, Dewey Odhner and others.

Copies are also available through the publisher's website, www.Xlibris.com, and at the Hurstville New Church Swedenborg Bookroom..

Letter to the Editors

Dear Editors

In the March Newsletter Miss M. M. White is quoted as saying “...men and women ... separate, ... are not complete. An Angel is a married pair in heaven. [F]or a use to be a use , it must have something from both men and women in it. There is not a single use in the world but needs for its successful accomplishment the efforts of men and women.”

Miss White is on solid ground in making these assertions for that is what the Writings clearly teach. Yet in the most important use there is, the formulation of doctrine, women are totally excluded.

The New Church grew out of the Anglican tradition and also became established at a time when women were considered subservient. Those